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Organized Crime in Canada: A Quarterly Summary April to June 2013

ORGANIZED CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

- [Corruption](#)
- [Drug Trafficking](#)
 - [Poly Drug Trafficking](#)
 - [Cocaine](#)
 - [Heroin](#)
 - [Synthetic Drugs](#)
- [Tobacco Smuggling](#)

ORGANIZED CRIME GENRES

- [Italian](#)
 - [Organized Street Gangs](#)
 - [Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs](#)
-

ORGANIZED CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

Corruption

The QMI News Agency reported in April that 37-year-old Alex Therrien, a patrol officer in Quebec's Sherbrooke Police Force, was arrested after he allegedly leaked sensitive information from a Quebec law enforcement database to a crime group associated with the Hells Angels. Gaetan Labbe, the Chief of the Sherbrooke Police, told QMI that Therrien was under surveillance "for the last several months." Between September and October 2012, Therrien was allegedly caught leaking information at least three occasions and was subsequently charged with four counts related to leaking sensitive police information, including breach of trust, obstruction of justice, and fraudulently using police computers. Therrien has served with the Sherbrooke police force for 15 years.

Sources: [Canoe.ca, June 11 2013, De nouvelles accusations contre le policier Alex Therrien;](#)
[Toronto Sun, April 5, 2013, Cop charged with leaking info to crime syndicate](#)



The QMI Agency also reported that Gilles Varin, a long-time Quebec Conservative party operative and lobbyist who died in April 2011, was the target of a year-long Quebec provincial police investigation over the course of 2008 and 2009 because of his alleged dealings with an organized crime group. This criminal group was led by Marvin Ouimet, a full patch-wearing member of the Trois-Rivières chapter of the Hells Angels, who stands accused of committing 22 murders as well as other criminal offences.

According to QMI, Varin's "cellphone was tapped, he was interrogated at length, and police later raided his home and car, seizing his personal agenda and computer."

Despite his knowledge of the investigation, Varin did not mention it to a House of Commons committee, which questioned him during a public hearing in 2010 about his unregistered federal lobbying activities. This informal lobbying included efforts to help L.M. Sauve, a Montreal-based company, win a \$9 million contract to renovate Parliament's West Block. In his testimony to the committee, Varin denied he was engaged in any lobbying.

Investigators learned that Varin told criminal associates of Ouimet that he did what was required at a political level to deliver the contract to L.M. Sauve. What Varin actually did to help win the contract is unclear; however, according to QMI, "the RCMP is close to laying criminal charges against a former Conservative aide to a Quebec senator in connection with the contract." Moreover, QMI claims that "the Hells Angels, using Varin's high-level political contacts, allegedly aimed to control the Quebec masonry business and got major government contracts from federal and provincial governments. The bikers also allegedly used companies they acquired or controlled to launder cash from the drug trade ... Varin even met with Ouimet and a half-dozen other construction company bosses at a suburban Montreal restaurant on Sept. 25, 2008 – under the watchful eyes of police investigators."

Sources: [Ottawa Sun, June 10 2013, Secret Quebec police probe targeted Hill lobbyist's links to Hells Angels boss](#); [TVA Nouvelles, June 10 2013, Il travaillait avec les Hells Angels; Enquête secrète de la SQ sur Gilles Varin](#)



In June, B.C. Hydro announced a number of its linemen have been suspended with pay while the company's corporate security department investigates allegations they helped set up clandestine and illegal electricity hook-ups to power marijuana grow-ops. The illegal power bypasses helped keep monthly hydro bills low to help power-hungry grow-ops avoid detection.

"At least 12, and possibly as many as 18 workers across the province, were identified in connection with the probe," according to Vancouver's Province newspaper.

Sgt. Lindsey Houghton, of B.C.'s Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit, was quoted by the Province as saying, "It is no surprise organized crime is going after people with these sorts of skills ... You have to have a constant supply of power to grow the plants at different stages ... They need the tradesmen to do it properly."

Kash Heed, a former chief of police in West Vancouver as well as a senior officer in the Vancouver Police Department's drug squad, told the Province, "We had our suspicions regarding some of the hydro bypasses because of the sophistication of these bypasses." He said the bypasses that are not done properly run a high risk of fires or even explosions. He said that B.C. Hydro linesmen are highly desired as opposed to professional electricians. "It is people with a lot of knowledge who know the hydro system who are the ones able to do a bypass."

B.C. Hydro estimates it loses \$154 million a year in the theft of electricity used to illegally grow pot, according to the Province newspaper.

Source: [The Province, June 21, 2013 B.C. Hydro workers suspended. Allegations that linemen helped steal power for illegal pot grow-ops](#)

Drug Trafficking

Poly-Drug Trafficking

At the end of May, 33-year-old Jimmy "Cosmo" Cournoyer of Quebec, reached a plea agreement with New York City prosecutors over his leadership role in a massive drug importation and trafficking conspiracy that involved the transport of millions of dollars of Canadian-produced marijuana into New York. Cournoyer faces a mandatory sentence of 20 years under the agreement reached with the Brooklyn District Attorney's office. The deal may also provide him with the opportunity of being transferred to a Canadian jail to serve his sentence, according to the [National Post](#) newspaper. Cournoyer is expected to be sentenced on September 27.

Cournoyer was supposed to stand trial in June in Brooklyn federal court, with several former associates slated to testify against him. Because he was charged under a federal "drug kingpin" statute, Cournoyer faced a mandatory life sentence if he had been convicted during a trial. As part of his plea bargain, Cournoyer pled guilty to numerous charges, including marijuana trafficking, cocaine trafficking, money laundering and witness tampering – and agreed to a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years. Cournoyer also agreed to forfeit just under \$11 million in cash seized during the police investigation.

According to the [New York Post](#), Cournoyer

... is something of a prodigy in the world of drug trafficking, who began assembling a drug gang while still a teenager, authorities say – and by his late 20s had constructed an impressive \$1 billion organization that spanned national borders. His empire included alliances with New York's Bonanno crime family, the Hells Angels, Mexico's Sinaloa cartel, as well as the Mafia's Rizzuto organized crime family and the West End Gang – both feared organizations based in Montreal ... Top-quality pot grown in British Columbia was transported across Canada to Quebec with the assistance of the Hells Angels and the Montreal Mafia, smuggled over the US border, and trucked to New York City, officials say. Then millions from marijuana sales were flown in private jets from New York to California, and then smuggled into Mexico to buy

cocaine from the Sinaloa cartel. Then the coke was transported to Canada where it was resold – with part of the profits underwriting the pot pipeline supplying New York City, according to officials and court documents.

“The illegal narcotics distributed worldwide by members of the criminal enterprise have a retail value of more than \$1 billion, conservatively,” federal prosecutor Steven Tiscione wrote to a judge.

Federal prosecutors secured convictions against more than 100 people in drug trafficking cases stemming from this ongoing conspiracy. One of those convicted was John “Big Man” Venizelos, an associate of New York’s Bonanno crime family, and one of Cournoyer’s biggest customers, who pled guilty to drug trafficking charges at the end of April. According to the [April 29 edition of the New York Post](#), “because Venizelos honored the mob’s omerta code of silence and refused to hand over information to the feds, sources said, he’s expected to face approximately 10-14 years in prison when sentenced eventually by Brooklyn federal Judge Raymond Dearie ... Prosecutors also say they seized letters written by an unnamed colleague of Venizelos that discussed the Bonanno associate’s ties to organized crime – including references to sit-downs with captains in various New York La Cosa Nostra families.”

Alessandro Taloni, another participant in the drug trafficking conspiracy also pleaded guilty in a Brooklyn courthouse. He admitted to trafficking in more than 80 kilograms of cocaine and laundering millions of dollars in the proceeds of drug trafficking. Taloni faces a prison term of at least 10 years and is expected to forfeit more than \$2 million in the proceeds of crime when sentenced. An [article in the Montreal Gazette](#) says that Taloni is part of the Bonanno crime family and is described by U.S. authorities as an alleged “associate of the Rizzuto organized crime family.” American authorities cited by the Gazette say he acted as Cournoyer’s wholesale distributor in the U.S. and “was personally sent from Montreal to Los Angeles to receive those drug proceeds (from the sale of marijuana) and to purchase cocaine from the Mexican sources.” The cocaine was then smuggled into Canada where it was “distributed by members and associates of the Rizzuto crime family,” court documents say.

On October 13 2010, agents with the Drug Enforcement Agency intercepted one of the private planes used to fly the cash from Canada to Los Angeles. Inside, they found (US) \$5.5 million in cash. During their investigation, law enforcement authorities in Los Angeles seized more than \$2.6-million in cash and 83 kilograms of cocaine from his Beverly Hills home and various stash houses also in Beverly Hills.

Sources: [New York Post, April 29 2013, Bonanno crime family associate to plead guilty to role in Canadian-NYC drug ring](#); [National Post, May 23 2013, Montreal Mafia family sent weekly chartered flights stuffed with millions in cash to L.A. to buy cocaine](#); [Montreal Gazette, May 23 2013, Alleged Rizzuto associate pleads guilty to trafficking conspiracy](#); [Los Angeles Times, May 23 2013, Drug trafficker for the mob kept cash, cocaine in Beverly Hills](#); [New York Post, May 29 2013, French-Canadian drug kingpin pleads guilty to trafficking marijuana](#); [National Post, May 29 2013, Jimmy Cournoyer accepts plea bargain that avoids life imprisonment](#)



In May, two men were arrested in Markham, Ontario after an estimated \$1.2 million in drugs and cash were seized by police from a vehicle they were operating at the time of the arrest. The drugs seized were 10 kilograms of cocaine, 500 grams of marijuana and two kilograms of opium. Thirty-one year-old Chung Mok of Markham was charged with multiple counts of possession of illegal drugs for the purpose of trafficking and possession of the proceeds of crime. The second man, 41-year-old Phu-Diep Luu, of Aurora, Ontario was charged with possession of ecstasy.

Source: [680News, June 7 2013, Two men face drug charges after \\$1.2 million worth of drugs seize](#)

In June, Toronto police laid several charges against four men after seizing approximately 65 kilograms of drugs with an approximate street value of \$6.5 million. Three of the men were arrested on May 6 after a search of their vehicle led to the discovery of about 33 kilograms of cocaine. After executing additional search warrants, police also recovered another 29 kilograms of cocaine, three kilograms of crystal meth and a small amount of liquid GHB.

Source: [National Post, June 7, 2013, Toronto police seize 62 kilograms of cocaine in \\$6.5-million drug bust](#)



The Vancouver Island team of the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of British Columbia made a number of arrests of alleged drug traffickers during the second quarter of this year.

On April 9, 2013, a 29-year-old Saanich man was arrested for possession of a firearm. When a search was conducted of his home in Saanich, police found one pound of dried marijuana, a 9mm handgun with the serial number filed off, ammunition and a magazine. “This man was known to associate with local drug dealers that have a history of violence in relation to the drug trade,” CFSEU-BC spokesperson Sergeant Lindsey Houghton said.

In a separate investigation, on April 10, 2013 two men were arrested, one of which “leads a violent drug trafficking group,” a CFSEU press release stated. A 35-year-old man was arrested in Delta and four kilograms of cocaine was seized. “This man was working in association with the leader of the drug network by distributing cocaine on the island. Our investigators believe that he was regularly picking up cocaine from the Lower Mainland and bringing it back to Vancouver Island on behalf of this group,” Sgt. Houghton explained. Another 35-year-old man, who the CFSEU said was the gang’s leader, was arrested in the Greater Victoria area the same day. “This guy is actively using violence, and we believe he has used extreme violence, to secure his drug network on Vancouver Island,” Sgt. Houghton said. After searching the homes of the two men, police seized a .357 Magnum handgun, a pistol-grip shotgun, a small quantity of steroids, and cocaine trafficking paraphernalia.

In June, as part of Project E-Pinpoint, the CFSEU on Vancouver Island arrested two men who they characterized as “high-level drug traffickers with a history of violence.” Following a search of two residences on Vancouver Island, police seized 2 kilograms of cocaine, 28 pounds of

marijuana, 10 litres of the date-rape drug GHB, 200 ecstasy pills and 1 kilogram of crystal methamphetamine. Additionally, one pound of a white powder believed to be a cutting agent was seized as well as large weigh scales. Police also confiscated ammunition and a shoulder gun holster. In addition, police found a medical marijuana growing operation, licensed by the federal government, at one of the locations and they are now determining if that growing operation complies with the terms of the licence.

Sources: [Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit – British Columbia Press Release, May 1, 2013, CFSEU-BC arrests violent drug traffickers on Vancouver Island](#); [Victoria Police Department Press Release, June 13, 2013, CFSEU-BC on Vancouver Island shuts down well-known drug network](#)

Cocaine

During the second quarter of 2013, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) made four significant seizures of cocaine, three of which took place at Toronto's Pearson Airport. According to CBSA press releases:

On March 10, 2013, border services officers identified two suspicious suitcases while monitoring a baggage offload of a flight arriving from Colombia. Officers noted that the two suitcases were excessively heavy and upon opening the suitcases, officers discovered several brick-shaped packages of suspected cocaine concealed within the lining of four down-filled vests. Approximately 33.6 kilograms of suspected cocaine was seized. The male traveller was arrested and was turned over to the RCMP along with suspected cocaine.

On March 16, 2013, border services officers working out of Terminal 3 monitored a controlled baggage offload of a flight from Trinidad and Tobago. Based on a number of indicators, a suitcase was selected for further examination. Officers found nearly 3.2 kilograms of suspected cocaine wrapped in a pillow and blankets in the suitcase.

On March 19, 2013, officers identified a suspicious suitcase while conducting a controlled offload of baggage on an evening flight from Trinidad and Tobago. The X-ray examination of the suitcase revealed several square-shaped anomalies. Upon opening the suitcase, officers found multiple packages of suspected cocaine. Officers seized close to 6.3 kilograms of suspected cocaine.

On May 28, 2013, an Ontario-plated tractor-trailer was referred for a secondary examination at the Ambassador Bridge Commercial Operations. During the examination, CBSA officers discovered a duffle bag containing 19 kilograms (19 bricks) of suspected cocaine in a storage compartment located inside the tractor. The CBSA arrested the driver and, as a result of a cooperative investigation, the RCMP charged Goudarz Daroughi Zilaie from Richmond Hill, Ontario with unlawfully importing a controlled substance contrary to section 6(1) of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA), and possession of a substance for the purpose of trafficking contrary to section 5(2) of the CDSA.

Sources: [Canada Border Services Agency Press Release, April 8, 2013, CBSA intercepts over 43 kilograms of suspected cocaine at Toronto Pearson International Airport](#); [Canada Border Services Agency Press Release, May 31, 2013, 19 kilograms of suspected cocaine seized at the Ambassador Bridge](#)



In April, Ontario Provincial Police arrested 10 people in an eight-month long investigation into cocaine trafficking in Eastern Ontario. Dubbed “Project Beaconsfield,” the joint operation with the Organized Crime Enforcement Bureau, Brockville Police Service and the RCMP was launched in July of 2012 and ultimately resulted in the seizure of seven kilograms of cocaine, 29 lbs. of marijuana, 18 grams of hashish, and over \$45,000 in cash. Several vehicles were also seized. According to police, the investigation was launched after a lengthy probe by the Ontario Racing Commission.

Sources: [Metro Ottawa, April 4, 2013, Organized crime unit nabs 10 in cocaine bust across Eastern Ontario](#)

Heroin

In May, the Canada Board Services Agency and RCMP announced they had seized 16 kilograms of suspected heroin at the Calgary International Airport in two separate incidents. On April 24, 12 kg of heroin was seized from the suitcases of a female traveller arriving from Amsterdam (making it the largest-ever seizure of heroin in Alberta by the CBSA). Around a week later, a second traveller was also arrested for attempting to smuggle 4 kg of suspected heroin. In both cases, the heroin was concealed in false-bottom compartments of suitcases. A RCMP Inspector said it’s not clear if the drug was destined for Calgary. He estimated that 16 kilograms would be equivalent to at least 800,000 doses of heroin.

Later that month, the CBSA announced they had made a “significant seizure” of more than 22 kilograms of heroin at the Toronto Pearson International Airport:

The seizure was made at Terminal Three on May 19 while border services officers monitored the baggage offload of a flight from Pakistan. Based on indicators, a single duffle bag that was lacking a luggage tag was selected for further examination. When the duffle bag was opened, officers found multiple rectangular-shaped packets wrapped in a floral pattern fabric. X-ray imagery then indicated possible organic matter concealed inside the packets, and subsequent narcotics testing proved positive for suspected heroin. As a result, officers seized over 22 kilograms of suspected heroin.

According to the CBSA, during the first four months of 2013, officers in the Greater Toronto Area have seized over 127 kilograms of suspected heroin.

Sources: [Calgary Herald, May 3 2013, Border agents make record heroin seizure at Calgary airport](#); [Canada Border Service Agency Press Release, May 27, 2013, CBSA intercepts over 22 kilograms of suspected heroin at the Toronto Pearson International Airport](#)

Synthetic Drugs

On April 19, CBSA officers at the Port of Vancouver Container Examination Facility seized over 2,000 litres of Hypophosphorous Acid, a precursor chemical used in the production of methamphetamine. The shipment was declared as soy sauce from China; however, upon further examination of the 384 pails in the marine container, CBSA officers found that the contents of 139 of the pails were not consistent with the declaration. Samples were taken and sent to the CBSA Laboratory for identification. The laboratory results later confirmed that the pails actually contained the precursor chemical. According to a CBSA press release, “To import Class A precursor chemicals listed in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, a Health Canada permit is required. As the importer did not have a permit, and did not declare the chemicals in this shipment, the 139 pails, containing 2,627 litres of Hypophosphorous Acid, were seized with no terms of release.” To date, no charges have been laid and the investigation continues.

Source: [CBSA Press Release, April 30, 2013, Large shipment of precursor chemicals seized by CBSA in Vancouver](#)



In June, a major police operation in Quebec, involving more than 300 police officers from 11 forces, resulted in the arrest of 40 people who had been targeted during a nine-month investigation into the trafficking of synthetic drugs in the Eastern Townships. The police operation resulted in the seizure of more than 600,000 pills, which were produced locally, and contained methamphetamine and other highly addictive compounds. Police said the pills had logos and nicknames, such as Spiderman and Facebook, that directly appealed to youth, and were being sold for between \$5 and \$20 apiece in areas close to schools, and at raves and after-hours clubs. A police spokesperson said the network that produced and distributed the pills have ties to the Mafia, biker gangs and street gangs.

A spokesperson for Health Canada said the federal department is receiving an increasing amount of pills from police to be analyzed. “It is constant progression its terms of the (pills) we receive for analysis every year.” A Laval police spokesperson said his police force seized, on average, 40,000 synthetic drug pills in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, the number jumped to 100,000 and, before the latest operation, they had already seized more than 70,000 pills in 2013.

As part of the police investigation, the Montreal Gazette reported, that a house searched in Laval “is tied to a 78-year-old man who was arrested a decade ago in Operation Northern Star, an investigation by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration that targeted several Canadians who produced large amounts of pseudoephedrine, a chemical precursor to methamphetamine, in cities

such as Laval and shipped them to the U.S.” In addition to the pills, police seized from this house a small quantity of marijuana, more than \$300,000 in cash, firearms and bulletproof vests.

Source: [Montreal Gazette, June 11, 2013, Major’ drug ring crackdown in Montreal region and Laurentians](#)



The RCMP and Canada Border Services in B.C. along with law enforcement authorities in New Zealand have dismantled a methamphetamine drug smuggling ring between Vancouver and New Zealand.

Operation Express began in December of 2012 when Canadian authorities seized two shipments of meth, containing approximately 6.6 kilograms concealed in truck shock absorbers. Police pegged the street value of the drugs at nearly \$6 million. The busts follow the execution of 14 search warrants in Auckland, New Zealand that resulted in the arrest of 10 suspects and the discovery of five marijuana grow operations containing some 600 mature plants concealed in homes on Auckland’s north shore. Those busts also yielded small quantities of meth and tens of thousands of dollars in cash. Eleven people were arrested, the majority of which are of Vietnamese origin.

Criminal groups in B.C., including those of Vietnamese origin, have long been active in illegal marijuana production and trafficking in the province and more recently have been known to export their growing expertise abroad. Several links had been found between Vietnamese criminal groups in B.C. and marijuana grow operations in Australia and New Zealand. According to The Province newspaper in Vancouver, “police in the United Kingdom have also identified ties between Canadian-based Vietnamese organized crime and grow ops in that region.”

Source: [The Province, February 26 2013, Meth smuggling ring with New Zealand-Vancouver link busted](#)

Tobacco Smuggling and Trafficking

On May 15 2013, CBSA officers intercepted 6,514 kg of contraband tobacco, with an estimated street value of more than \$500,000, while searching a truck at the Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle border crossing in Quebec. According to a CBSA press release, “The driver had declared that the truck contained 26 large cardboard boxes of used clothing. Following further examination of the vehicle, CBSA officers found loose tobacco hidden under piles of used clothing.”

Meanwhile, in June, Police in Eastern Ontario announced they had broken up a ring that was allegedly smuggling tobacco between Canada and the United States as well as trafficking marijuana in Canada. The Cornwall Regional Task Force Serious and Organized Crime Team said that 37 people from Ontario and Quebec were facing charges after the RCMP-led Project O-

Titan. According to the Ottawa Citizen, “the project began in 2012 and targeted five separate groups operating together to smuggle contraband tobacco from the United States into the Cornwall area and distribute it around Eastern Ontario. During the investigation, police seized 11,615 cartons of cigarettes, four firearms, 17 vehicles, two boats, more than 100 pounds of marijuana and more than \$52,000 in Canadian currency. Two grow ops were also dismantled, and a court order was obtained to restrain a Cornwall residence that was used to grow marijuana.”

Sources: [Canada Border Services Press Release, May 23 2013, CBSA seizes 6,514 kg of contraband tobacco at Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle border crossing Montréal, Quebec](#); [Ottawa Citizen, June 20, 2013, Police break up alleged tobacco smuggling ring](#); [The Cornwall Free News, June 20 2013, Project O-Titan CRTF Charge 37 in Massive Marijuana Smuggling Bust near Cornwall Ontario](#)

ORGANIZED CRIME GENRES

Hispanic

In April, the Toronto Star reported on internal RCMP documents that claim escalating violence among drug trafficking cartels in Mexican is claiming the lives of a growing number of Canadian drug dealers. The report notes that between 2008 and 2012, at least nine Canadians “with extensive criminal associations” were shot or killed in Mexico.

As the Toronto Star states, “in increasing numbers, Canadian organized crime groups are choosing to deal directly with Mexican drug cartels, the report states. This allows them to eliminate the middleman and increase their profits.” Among those Canadians murdered in Mexico are Gordon Douglas Kendall and Jeffrey Ronald Ivans. Both were from Kamloops, both were known to police, and both were shot repeatedly in the head in Puerto Vallarta in September 2009. In April 2012, Thomas Gisby, who was also well known to police, was shot dead at close range at Starbucks in Nuevo Vallarta. Elliott Castaneda and Ahmet (Lou) Kaawach, both of the B.C.-based United Nations gang, were murdered in Guadalajara in July 2008. Salih (Sal) Abdulaziz Sahbaz, considered a senior member of the United Nations gang, was shot several times near Mazatlan in January 2012.

The Star quotes the report as saying, “the Canadian-related violence occurring in Mexico may represent a reverse order of events in which Canadian criminal disputes and retaliatory actions are making their way South ... the cartel influence is being exerted on Canadian criminal groups from within Mexico resulting in an imposed allegiance before returning Canadian operators to Canada.” According to the Toronto Star, the report also identifies “the presence in the Mexican underworld of an Ontario group that is suspected in at least one unsolved GTA gangland-style murder and another in Montreal.”

The RCMP report suggests that the ongoing violence in Mexico and tight U.S. border surveillance is one factor in the greater presence of Mexican drug traffickers in Canada, who

bring their violent ways with them. “An escalation in murders and shootings within the criminal element in British Columbia in 2007-2008 paralleled with reporting of brutal and extreme levels of violence in Mexico have raised concern of Mexican criminal influence in Canada,” the report states.

Source: [Toronto Star, April 19 2013, Mexican drug cartel violence hits Canadian mobsters](#)

Italian

Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta

Four men from Thunder Bay, Ontario are named in Italian arrest warrants as being associated with the ‘Ndrangheta, the Calabria-based mafia group that has cells throughout Canada and the world. The four Thunder Bay men were named in Italian arrest warrants issued in February 2011 as part of a two-year Italian investigation called *Operazione Crimine*.

The Italian warrants “derive from a series of meetings and conversations between visiting Canadians” and Giuseppe (The Master) Commisso, a prominent ‘Ndrangheta leader who was recently jailed in Italy for 14 years for Mafia activity.

Only one of the four Italian-Canadian men is in Italian custody. That is because 66-year-old Giuseppe Bruzzese, a resident of Thunder Bay, was in Italy in 2011, the time the warrants were issued. “In Bruzzese’s case, we followed him in Italy and arrested him quickly,” prosecutor Antonio De Bernardo told the Toronto Star newspaper.

The three other Thunder Bay residents, all Canadian citizens, are not in custody in Italy, nor are they expected to be extradited by Canadian authorities because Canada doesn’t recognize Italy’s offence of “mafia association” as a criminal offence in this country. The three other Italian-Canadian men listed in the arrest warrants are 72-year-old Antonio Minnella, who runs a successful real estate and development firm, a 66-year-old retired welder named Rocco Etneni, and 55-year-old Cosimo Cirillo.

Bruzzese could face up to 19 years in prison in Italy if he is found guilty on charges of being associated with the ‘Ndrangheta. Prosecutors in that country allege that Bruzzese was identified through police surveillance in a high-level meeting in an Italian laundromat with Giuseppe Commisso who, according to the Toronto Star, “held court inside his basement laundromat in Siderno, Italy, in 2009 where police were monitoring his activities as part of the Crimine probe.” Court documents allege Bruzzese attended at least two of the meetings with the ‘Ndrangheta leader between July 27 and August 10, 2009.

According to CBC news, Bruzzese “is accused of being a key figure in the Thunder Bay cell of the organized crime group and is now on trial in the southern Italian region of Calabria.” The CBC also quoted Armando Gerace, Bruzzese’s lawyer, who contends his client was simply

having coffee with a friend. “He never committed a single crime, or act of intimidation,” Gerace said. “He is putting his integrity on the line, and also he is not rich.”

One of the other Canadian men named in the Italian arrest warrant, Antonio Minnella, told CBC News that he has no connection to organized crime and believes the allegations are the result of mistaken identity. Thunder Bay lawyer Christopher Watkins, who is acting as Minnella’s legal adviser, said the Canadian government should intervene in the case to make sure the rights of the Thunder Bay men are protected. “This type of evidence would not pass purview in Canada, it would certainly not be reaching a level of even a charge under a Canadian constitution,” Watkins said.

According to the Toronto Star, during a February 2011 pretrial detention hearing in the city of Reggio Calabria, Bruzzese and the other Thunder Bay men faced accusations of holding “important positions” within the ‘Ndrangheta, which meant “taking the most important decisions, giving instructions or imposing other sanctions associated with their subordinates.” In her ruling, the judge said the allegations of “association with the Mafia” were connected to underworld crimes of firearms and drug trafficking, extortion and murders, and concluded there was sufficient evidence to order the arrest of Bruzzese and the other men. “We have them on audio talking to The Master about activities in Thunder Bay,” prosecutor De Bernardo said in an interview. “Anyone who spoke to The Master is a boss or a powerful player.”

[In a 2013 unclassified threat assessment report on Italian organized crime](#), Europol wrote:

The Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta is among the most powerful organised crime groups at a global level. Its colonisation strategy is spreading all over the world. The ‘Ndrangheta holds a dominant position in the cocaine market in Europe, and is involved in many other criminal fields, including weapons trafficking, fraud, rigging of public tenders, corruption, intimidation, extortion and environmental crime. The ‘Ndrangheta employs sophisticated money laundering practices to conceal its immense profits. The clever use of legitimate business structures created by its Clans permits them to hide the criminal nature of their profits and, combined with corruption, to infiltrate the economic and political environments in which they operate. In Europe the Clans are mainly active in Spain, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland, with some expansion into Eastern Europe. The ‘Ndrangheta is also very powerful in Canada, the United States, Colombia and Australia.

CBC News cited Italian prosecutors who said the arrest warrants for the four Italian-Canadian men highlight the global reach of the ‘Ndrangheta. Nicola Gratteri, the chief anti-Mafia prosecutor in Calabria, told the CBC the ‘Ndrangheta is the only Mafia that is present on all continents. “I think the foreign country where the ‘Ndrangheta is the most present is in Canada,” he said. “Mostly in Ontario, especially Toronto, and also in Montreal ... We have found in our research there are at least nine ‘Ndrangheta localis just in Toronto. Which means there are hundreds of members, as each locali has at least 51 members.”

A joint investigation by the Toronto Star and Radio-Canada/CBC in 2012 obtained court records from Italy identifying mafia cells in Toronto and Thunder Bay. [In October, the Toronto Star reported](#) accusations of “top Italian police authorities” who accused Ontario of becoming an

international “penal colony” for alleged members of the Italian ‘Ndrangheta, who fled Italy for the sanctity of Canada.

Sources: [CBC News, June 28, 2013, Ontario man accused of Mafia links faces prison in Italy](#); [Toronto Star, June 28 2013, An Italian crime clan’s reach into Canada](#)

Sicilian Mafia

Juan Ramon Fernandez, an alleged made member of the Rizzuto mafia family, was gunned down in a planned ambush in Casteldaccia, just outside Palermo, Sicily. He was killed along with another man linked to the Rizzuto crime family, Fernando Pimentel. The bullet-riddled corpses of the two men had also been set on fire. Italian police discovered their charred remains based on an anonymous tip.

[Adrian Humphreys, of the National Post](#), describes the circumstances surrounding Fernandez’s death:

Mr. Fernandez’s last day alive was April 9 when he and Fernando Pimentel, 36, an associate from Mississauga, Ont., who was visiting him in Sicily, left for a meeting to close a marijuana deal, authorities say. He was meeting Pietro and Salvatore Scaduto, two brothers, in an isolated field outside Bagheria, near Palermo, where Mr. Fernandez was told a large marijuana crop was being harvested, authorities alleged. Mr. Fernandez knew the brothers and trusted them; he was heard many times on police wiretaps extolling their friendship. The deal, however, was a planned ambush, the type needed to kill someone as feared as Mr. Fernandez. When they got out of the car, they were met with a fusillade of bullets, killing them both, authorities said. Their bodies were stripped of their valuables, pushed into the bush at the side of the dirt road and burned ... days later, one of the Scaduto brothers was caught trying to sell Mr. Fernandez’s Rolex watch for 3,000 euros, authorities said. Investigators in Canada believe the watch was given to him by Vito Rizzuto...

[According to Humphreys](#), the murders are a sign that the “mob war” in Montreal – which allegedly pits the Rizzuto clan against a breakaway group headed by Raynald Desjardins (and purportedly supported by the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta) –has spread to Italy. One of the signs is that the two men arrested by Italian police for the murders – brothers Pietro and Salvatore Scaduto – are former residents of Toronto. Pietro Scaduto was the target of a botched 2004 mob hit in Toronto that left an innocent woman paralyzed from a stray bullet. He was subsequently deported from Canada.

The [May 8 edition of the National Post](#) describes the possible motives behind the Scadutos’ murder of Fernandez:

After leaving Canada, the Scadutos sought to re-establish their family as a mob power in Bagheria while maintaining contact with friends in Montreal and Toronto, authorities said. Recently, the Scadutos envisioned seizing control in the underworld of Bagheria, a neighbouring

city of Palermo, authorities allege. They were prepared to kill anyone who stood in their way, including — if needed — Sergio Flamia, who was an influential boss in the area of Bagheria, and Michele Modica, another deportee from Canada, according to authorities ... Mr. Flamia had grown close to Mr. Fernandez. In fact, Mr. Fernandez was making so much money for his partners that most mobsters in the area wanted to work with him and were even willing to overlook his flouting Mafia convention by claiming to be an official “made member” of Montreal’s Mafia despite being Spanish, not Italian. The Scaduto brothers began to fear that Mr. Fernandez and Mr. Flamia might gang up on them to squelch their bid for power, authorities allege. It is alleged that Pietro Scaduto reached out to Canadian contacts to help resolve the situation ...

A third man, Giuseppe Carbone, admitted he was also involved in the slayings in Sicily and is co-operating with Italian police. He, too, has ties to Canada. His brother, Andrea Carbone, was deported from Canada after the same botched Toronto shooting.

The National Post quoted one Italian police investigator who said, “We believe the order to kill him [Fernandez] came from Canada. We are sure of it.” As Humphrey’s notes, permission to kill a made member of the Rizzuto family would have had to come from someone of a high rank within that family.

Italian authorities were actually searching for Fernandez as part of a major drug investigation, codenamed Operation Argo, which targeted reputed Sicilian mob bosses in the Palermo area for their alleged roles in the international drug trade. In total, 21 people were arrested as part of this investigation. According to Humphreys, “Mr. Fernandez was named as a lynchpin of a Sicily-to-Canada drug network and dubbed ‘Cosa Nostra’s Canadian ambassador.’” While in Sicily, Fernandez was behind the export of oxycodone pills from Sicily to Canada, using Sicilian Mafiosi as couriers. He was also arranging cocaine shipments from Ecuador and Colombia to Italy and Canada, Italian police said. As Humphreys writes, “the murders backstop a large investigation by Italian police revealing the trans-Atlantic reach of the Mafia in Canada, with mobsters shuttling from Toronto and Montreal to arrange global drug shipments and even continuing their underworld feud abroad as if borders did not exist. “

A Spanish citizen, Fernandez was deported from Canada for the third time after serving a 10-year sentence for conspiracy to murder. Two months after Mr. Fernandez was released from prison in Canada in 2004 and deported to Spain he arrived in Bagheria, a town in the province of Palermo, Sicily. Humphreys notes that this again shows the “links between the underworld of Canada and Italy”; he chose Bagheria “because as many as 10 mafiosi there have ties to Canada, primarily with the Rizzuto crime family” according to an Italian police spokesperson. “Several are former residents of Canada, including Michele Modica, Andrea Carbone and Pietro Scaduto — all of whom were involved in the notorious California Sandwiches shooting in Toronto in 2004, a botched mob hit that left Louise Russo, an innocent mother, paralyzed. After that shooting, all were deported back to Bagheria.”

According to the [May 10 edition of the National Post](#), another they why Fernandez may have been killed was “because he was reluctant to choose sides in Montreal’s deadly Mafia war.” Italian police wire taps apparently overheard Fernandez tell others that he was close to Vito

Rizzuto but was also close to Raynald Desjardins, who he named as leading the rebel faction challenging Rizzuto's control, police in Italy said. According to the National Post, "his supposedly private chats reveal Mr. Fernandez as a man of conflicting loyalties — he was first brought into the upper echelons of the underworld by Mr. Desjardins, whom he knew from prison but Mr. Rizzuto was the key to his growing power ... Mr. Fernandez told mafiosi whom he met in Sicily that he was, in fact, a "man of honour," meaning a formal member of the crime cartel, even though he is not Italian."

Sources: [National Post, May 8 2013, Juan Ramon Fernandez allegedly running Italy-to-Canada drug network](#); [Toronto Sun, May 9 2013, Rizzuto associate, accomplice found shot, burned in Sicily](#); [National Post, May 9 2013, Violent death of Canada mobster in Sicily ambush a sign Montreal's mob war has spread](#); [National Post, May 10 2013, Montreal mob boss Vito Rizzuto paid for breaking Mafia rules, Sicily wiretaps show](#)



In another development linked to the ongoing mafia violence in Montreal, four men were arrested in May in connection with the murder of Gaetan Gosselin, the right-hand man of Raynald Desjardins. The 69-year-old Gosselin was shot as he exited his car near his home in Montreal on January 22. Montreal police Commander Ian Lafreniere described the suspects as "people from street gangs working for the Mafia ... People always thought it was a confrontation and now we can see that people work for the same goal, which is money. This morning we arrested four suspected street gang members but we believe they have been working for the Mafia."

Gosselin is the former brother-in-law and associate of Raynald Desjardins, who is believed to be a made member of the Rizzuto mafia family and who is allegedly siding with factions against Vito Rizzuto. Desjardins is currently in police custody, accused of participating in the murder of Salvatore Montagna, who himself was allegedly trying to take over the Montreal mafia while Vito Rizzuto was in an American jail.

Sources: [CTV News \(Montreal\), May 15, 2013, Four arrested in Mafia-linked murder](#)



At the end of May, 20 people were arrested for their involvement in drug trafficking in Montreal's east end. The drug trafficking network is allegedly responsible for the distribution of cocaine, marijuana and synthetic drugs, mostly out of Italian cafes. Cmdr Lafreniere of the Montreal police described the group as up-and-comers, with the average age of those arrested being around 30. According to [CTV News](#), "the suspects formed a younger, unaligned segment of the local Italian Mafia which has no traditional clan loyalty and works with street gangs and other elements of the criminal underworld, according to Montreal police." Citing the Montreal police spokesperson, the [Canadian Press](#) writes, "while the group is allegedly linked to the Italian Mafia, he said it doesn't have any affiliation to a specific clan, like the Rizzutos." This drug trafficking group may in fact be filling a void in the supply of drugs that has been created by the decline of the Rizzuto mafia family and the violence that has engulfed the criminal underworld

in recent years. “We are talking about young people who are taking the place of other people that have been there,” Lafreniere stated.

As the [Canadian Press reports](#),

Lafreniere said the arrests demonstrate a sharp change in how organized crime is functioning in the city. In the past, police have been able to identify individuals as being part of a certain group — be it a particular street gang or organized crime clan. Now, Lafreniere said, it’s all about money and greed and affiliations change quickly. “I’d say that for the past year, it hasn’t been the same and we’re not talking about distinct groups anymore,” Lafreniere told reporters outside Montreal police headquarters ... “One group can easily change colours overnight and side with another group if there is money to be made.”

According to La Presse crime reporter David Santerre, “Those guys were Vito’s opponents. So today Vito’s opponents are weaker than they were before ... They’re not necessarily only working with Italians,” he noted. “They’ll make alliances to make the most money as possible, they’ll take every occasion to get stronger, they’ll make alliances with other kinds of gangs, and it’s a thing we haven’t seen much in the past.”

In addition to the east end of Montreal, the drug trafficking network operated in Laval and Terrebonne, two communities on the city’s North Shore.

As part of the raids, police seized 29 weapons.

Sources: [The Tyee, May 29 2013, At least 20 arrested in crackdown on alleged Mafia-linked drug network](#); [National Post, May 29 2013, Mafia-linked drug bust in Montreal area results in 20 arrests over alleged cocaine, pot distribution](#), [CTV News, May 29, 2013, Drug bust targets unaligned Mafia ring](#)

Organized Street Gangs

In June, police in Toronto and Windsor conducted a series of early morning raids as part of a year-long investigation called Project Traveller into the Dixon City Bloods gang, which is based in northwest Toronto. Police officers from 17 agencies executed 39 search warrants in Toronto and Windsor. Nineteen people were arrested in the raids that targeted residents in several high-rise apartment buildings along Dixon Road. To date, a total of 224 charges have been laid against 44 people from Toronto, Windsor, Edmonton and Detroit. Police have also seized 40 guns, more than \$3-million worth of narcotics and \$572,000 in cash. Members of the gang are accused of being involved in trafficking firearms and drugs as well as murders and attempted murders.

Among those arrested are Muhammad Khattak and Monir Kassim, who are pictured in a now infamous photo alongside Toronto Mayor Rob Ford and shooting victim Anthony Smith. The 19-year-old Khattak, who was also shot alongside 21-year-old Smith in March of 2103, is charged with trafficking in marijuana and participating in a criminal organization. Twenty-year-old

Kassim is charged with trafficking in weapons and drugs for the benefit of a criminal organization, conspiracy to commit an indictable offence, theft under \$5,000 and failure to comply. The house at 15 Windsor Road where the photo of Ford and the other men is believed to have been taken was one of several addresses targeted by a search warrant.

Sources: [Globe and Mail, June 13 2013, 43 arrested in Ontario police operation that included site linked to alleged Rob Ford video](#); [Toronto Star, June 17 2013, Toronto police raids: List of names and 224 charges released in Project Traveller gang sweep](#)

Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs

British Columbia

Kim Bolan of the Vancouver Sun reported in April that in the face of recent setbacks at the hands of law enforcement, the East End Chapter of the Hells Angels sent a message that they “still dominate the underworld.” A memorial ride for a slain colleague early that month was attended by close to 100 full-patch members and associates. After the group ride, the East End chapter held a party at their clubhouse at 3598 East Georgia. (The clubhouse is currently the subject of a civil forfeiture application by the B.C. government, which is attempting to seize it because of its links to criminal activity.) Bolan quotes Vancouver Police Sgt. Randy Fincham who said the bikers “took to the streets to send a message to their rivals that they still dominate the underworld.” There are currently nine full-patch members of the East End chapter, down from 21 in 2004, according to Bolan. The size of the chapter has been reduced due to arrests and convictions following the E-Pandora undercover investigation. Others have quit the one percenter motorcycle club, while still others have joined different Hells Angels chapters, like the Nomads or the Kelowna chapter.

Source: [Vancouver Sun April 7, 2013, East End Hells Angels ‘send message they still dominate underworld’](#)



David Baines, a business columnist for the Vancouver Sun, writes that “he has discovered evidence that raises the distinct possibility that the Hells Angels financing the illicit promotion of dubious penny stocks in B.C.”

It begins in February 2012 when Erwin Speckert, who styles himself as a Swiss fiduciary even though he has a permanent residence in Ontario, was arrested in a Winnipeg bus depot after security officers found \$1.3 million cash in his backpack. At the time, Speckert was en route to Vancouver. RCMP released him and returned his money after he provided what they described as a plausible explanation. Six months later, the B.C. Securities Commission learned he had funnelled \$8.2 million from offshore accounts to Abbotsford stock tout Colin McCabe to promote dodgy stocks listed on the OTC Bulletin Board in the United States. Speckert told BCSC investigators that the money belonged to his clients, but he refused to say who they were,

ostensibly due to Swiss confidentiality laws. The commission wasn't happy with this response. It charged him with "facilitating the secret promotion" of stock in or from B.C. Speckert is contesting the allegations. A hearing is pending. Although Manitoba RCMP released Speckert after finding all that cash in his backpack, they continued to investigate the matter. In February this year, they charged him with possessing the proceeds of crime, trafficking in the proceeds of crime, possession for the purpose of trafficking in proceeds of crime, and laundering the proceeds of crime — to wit, the proceeds of illegal gambling in Ontario. He was arrested and is currently awaiting trial.

The RCMP declined to provide any information on the gambling enterprise, but I have now determined that it is an Internet gambling enterprise involving London Hells Angel Rob Barletta. Rob Barletta is the former president of the London Hells Angels. His nightclub, called Famous Flesh Gordon's, is currently the subject of a liquor licensing hearing in Ontario. The Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario's registrar wants to pull Barletta's liquor licence because of his connections with the Hells Angels and has taken the battle to the Ontario Court of Appeal, the province's highest court. On March 6, the London Free Press reported that Barletta, 43, had been arrested in connection with the police bust of Platinum Sportsbook in Markham, Ont., during a Super Bowl party a month earlier. Police said the gambling site provided the Hells Angels and their partners in traditional organized crime groups with millions of dollars, which fuelled other crimes, such as human and drug trafficking. I have determined that this is the illicit gambling enterprise that police referred to when they charged Speckert with possessing the proceeds of crime and money laundering. Whether any of that money was destined for illicit stock promotion purposes is not clear, but it certainly raises that rather disturbing possibility.

Source: [Vancouver Sun, June 1, 2013, Bag of cash intercepted en route to Vancouver came from Hells Angel-linked gambling enterprise](#)



In early May, police officers with the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of B.C. executed search warrants on four rural properties in Mission and a home in Langley that were the sites of sophisticated marijuana grow-ops and which police said are linked to the Hells Angels.

"The grow-ops are linked to the outlaw motorcycle gang and show a level of sophistication — both in terms of technology, construction, and security measures — that officers with decades of experience busting grow-ops have not seen, CFSEU-BC spokesman Sgt. Lindsey Houghton was quoted as saying in a press release. "We are talking about large, highly sophisticated grows that are using the latest technology to boost the growing cycle as well as extremely high levels of security to keep the grow operation concealed from both the police and, more importantly from the grower's perspective, from organizations that exist almost solely to steal or "rip" grow-operations."

One of the grow-ops was secreted in an underground bunker that was hidden by a fake horse paddock above ground. Some of the necessary venting for the underground grow-op was well concealed by a fake doghouse and fire pit. "They went to great lengths to build this and house

this,” said Houghton. The other grow-ops were all on ground level. All were built in a similar fashion; all were constructed to code, utilizing professional tradespeople.

About 10,000 plants and 200 pounds of dried marijuana were seized from the four grow-ops. Police estimated the marijuana has a value of between five million to \$10 million. In addition, around \$20,000 in cash was recovered from one of the homes. “The equipment used to produce the marijuana is estimated to be valued at \$1 million,” the CFSEU press release read. “Of note, each property was operated by a natural gas generator capable of providing power to a small town. Worth an estimated \$100,000 each, the generators had to be removed by a large crane.”

Five people were arrested and then released from custody after no charges were immediately laid.

In June, the CFSEU-BC said it had raided another sophisticated underground bunker that housed a marijuana grow-op and is also believed to be linked to the Hells Angels. This one was located at a property in Langley and concealed five underground shipping containers under a small hobby farm that housed three sheep, a pig and a dozen dogs. Each of the underground steel containers had a doorway cut through it so that all of them were connected. The grow-op, which is believed to have been operating for at least a couple years, was powered by an industrial-sized natural gas generator, similar to what was found in Mission, and worth an estimated \$100,000. According to Sgt. Lindsey Houghton,

To fuel the underground generator and further conceal the operation from the public and police, it was discovered, to the shock of the officers, that a nearby natural gas pipeline had been cut into and a bypass installed to redirect the gas to the generator ... the generator’s muffler was disguised from view with an old manure spreader placed over top of the muffler ... From trucking the containers in on flat-bed trailers, to excavating massive holes, to needing a crane to lower the containers into the ground, and then having people get the grow-op up and running, this was a complex operation that required a great deal of planning and equipment. Make no mistake; however, this had the potential to be extremely dangerous to the public and emergency responders.

Police found 430 marijuana plants in total and approximately 1.5 pounds of dried marijuana. A loaded firearm was also found in one of the bedrooms of the house on the property.

Sources: [The Province, May 7, 2013, \\$10M in marijuana seized from sophisticated grow-ops in Fraser Valley](#); [Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit-British Columbia, May 6 2013, CFSEU-BC Shuts Down Four Sophisticated Marijuana Grow Ops](#); [Vancouver Sun, June 4, 2013, Police find another underground pot bunker linked to Hells Angels](#)



Frederick Widdifield, a full-patch member of the Nanaimo chapter of the Hells Angels, has had his criminal charges of extortion and theft stayed after a judge ruled his charter rights were violated because the case took too long to go to trial. His lawyer argued that Crown prosecutors and circumstances involving his client’s three co-accused were to blame for the delay. B.C.

Supreme Court Justice Robert Johnston agreed in a written ruling that said the Crown contributed to the delay by not providing Widdifield's lawyer all of the evidence it had gathered in a timely manner. Justice Johnston also said the Crown should have proceeded to trial against Widdifield alone instead of with his co-accused (who also had their trials delayed due to personal circumstances).

Widdifield and three others linked to the Hells Angels were charged with extortion in November 2010 after they allegedly pressured a man for \$250,000 in cash and property to settle a 1994 debt. The trial was scheduled to start in October 2012 but was then put off until this fall. The trial against the other three men is set to begin this fall.

Sources: [CTV News, Extortion and theft charges stayed against B.C. Hells Angels June 5, 2013;](#)
[Vancouver Sun, June 4 2013, Nanaimo Hells Angel sees criminal charges stayed after court delays](#)



In another bit of good news for the Hells Angels Nanaimo chapter, a B.C. Supreme Court justice has ordered the B.C. government to rewrite some of its claims in its civil suit that aims to seized the bikers' clubhouse in that city. As Kim Bolan writes in the Vancouver Sun, "Justice Barry Davies agreed with some of the Hells Angels' concerns that the pleadings of the director of civil forfeiture were too vague or over-reaching, making it difficult for the bikers to defend themselves when the case finally goes to trial ... In the latest round, Davies ordered some paragraphs of the government's claim to be removed and others to be reworded to include only specific allegations of criminal activity linked to the clubhouse." The Nanaimo clubhouse was seized by police on November 9 2007. The B.C. government is alleging it should be forfeited because it has been used as an instrument of criminal activity by the Hells Angels.

Source: [Vancouver Sun, June 7 2013, Bikers win small victory in long-running Nanaimo clubhouse court battle](#)



In June, Joseph Bruce Skreptak, a full patch member of the Kelowna chapter of the Hells Angels was sentenced to 26 months in prison after pleading guilty to aggravated assault. According to the Kelowna News:

After pleading guilty to one count of aggravated assault on the day before his trial was expected to begin last year, the other two charges of Assault and Break and Enter have been stayed. He has been ordered to provide a DNA sample for the national database and will be prohibited from owning or possessing any firearms for 10 years, but will not serve any probation once he is released from jail. In delivering his sentencing, Justice Betton made mention of Skreptak's admitted membership in the Hells Angels and said he acted like a "vigilante," when he committed a "serious and unprovoked assault with serious consequences." The assault stemmed from an incident in 2010 when Skreptak believed a youth visiting his home had stolen \$10,000 worth of jewelry. Instead of going to the police, he went to the youth's home and viciously beat

the boy's father, causing "significant facial trauma" that warranted reconstructive facial surgery and the insertion of two metal plates.

Source: [Kelowna News, June 18 2013, Hells Angels member gets 26 months](#)



In April, Brent Douglas Milne, a full-patch member of the White Rock chapter of the Hells Angels pleaded guilty in Surrey Provincial Court to possession of cocaine for the purpose of trafficking. Milne was arrested by police, after a search warrant was executed on his Langley home in May of 2012. As part of an ongoing drug investigation into cocaine trafficking in Abbotsford by the Hells Angels, police found approximately 800 grams of cocaine in 12 Ziploc bags along with \$27,865 cash in his home. Milne remains on bail pending a sentencing hearing to be held on September 23. Federal prosecutors indicated that they will seek a jail sentence and will also be making an application to permanently confiscate "all offence-related property that was seized by the police." This includes Milne's house, which the Crown alleges was purchased in part with "proceeds from the trafficking of cannabis and cocaine." The government alleges three vehicles he owns were also purchased with drug money and should be forfeited.

Source: [Vancouver Sun, April 30, 2013, Full patch Angel pleads guilty to trafficking cocaine](#)

Alberta

Police have confirmed that the Hells Angels have a "puppet club" in Fort McMurray, Alberta called the Syndicate. There is no indication as to whether this one percenter biker club has any relationship to or is modelled after the Montreal-based Syndicate biker club that was also associated with the Hells Angels during the 1990s.

[According to the May 31 edition of the Gangsters Out Blog](#), "Evidently, Fort McMurray is another small town that is suffering from the Hells Angels drug and prostitution trade." The blogger writes that one source claims that Cecil (Kristian) MacEachern, who is from Glace Bay, Cape Breton "is the one running the Syndicate MC in Fort McMurray. Seemingly Cecil was kicked out in 2009 for being a rat and is now back in charge. They go around town telling everyone that they are the Hells Angels Syndicate and are here to do the HA work."

The [Fort McMurray Today newspaper reported in 2011](#) that "even though the Hells Angels don't have a chapter in Fort McMurray, they do have a support club in the area." The newspaper quoted Len Isnor, detective sergeant with the biker enforcement unit of the Ontario Provincial Police, who said, "The Hells Angels have interest in that area because of the drug market and if one person is out of the picture, they will replace them with someone else."

When asked if the Hells Angels have an interest in Fort McMurray, Isnor said, "Absolutely. Lots of money, a very high-income community, a lot of disposable income that is used recreationally and people want drugs, so there is a huge market ... They're not there physically with a chapter,

however, they have associates up there ... There is a biker puppet club. They're not always called puppet clubs, but there is a support club or an associate club that works there for the Hells Angels."

According to the Fort McMurray Today,

The motorcycle club that Isnor is referring to is a group called the Ft. McMurray Syndicate, a smaller motorcycle club that has surfaced in Fort McMurray in the last year and allegedly has ties to the Edmonton chapter of the Hells Angels ... Isnor explained that Hells Angels are supplying cocaine and other drugs to the Fort McMurray area, but noted that there are a number of groups responsible for the drug trade in the city. And added that Hells Angels in the past have used support clubs to separate themselves from illegal activity saying the likeliness of a Hells Angels chapter forming in Fort McMurray is slim.

This is because, according to Isnor "... right now, if the chapters in Edmonton are running Fort McMurray, they don't want to establish a chapter there and divide Fort McMurray up."

Insnor told the newspaper that Hells Angels support clubs are being established throughout Alberta as part of a sophisticated criminal network that helps distance Hells Angels members and chapters from crimes being committed in that province.

Sources: [Gangsters Out Blog, May 31 2013, Bacchus and the Syndicate in Fort McMurray](#); [Fort McMurray Today, October 18 2011, Will new gang fill druglord's shoes?](#)

Saskatchewan

In May, the CBC interviewed Inspector Jerome Engele of the Saskatoon Police Force who warned that a new law that allows strip bars in the province to sell alcohol may attract the involvement of the Hells Angels. This warning is based on the well-known involvement of the Hells Angels in strip bars as well as the management of exotic dancers.

"Members of the Hells Angels organization in Saskatoon are definitely on the Saskatoon police service's radar. We do actively investigate them," he said.

"Investigate – but not prosecute," the CBC retorted. "The 28 full patch members in Saskatchewan keep a low profile compared to their counterparts in other provinces. The Ontario Supreme Court, for example, classifies the Hells Angels in that province as an organized crime group. But not so here."

Engele confirmed this, telling the CBC, "We have no charges, and as a result they are normal citizens going about living their own normal lives."

Engele is particularly concerned because the Saskatoon chapter hosted the Hells Angels annual Canada run, which attracted hundreds of members and associates from across the country. "It's

a big concern of mine because of the fact why is Saskatoon being nationally recognized? What have they done? Where have they been?" The CBC also reported Engele's concern that there are four more full-patch members in the club since 2012.

Source: [CBC News, May 13 2013, Saskatoon police keeping close eye on Hells Angels](#)

Manitoba

At the end of April, the Winnipeg Free Press reported that Dale Sweeney, the former president of the Winnipeg chapter of the Hells Angels, pled guilty to charges of trafficking cocaine and possession of proceeds of crime and was sentenced to an 11-year prison term. The sentence was the result of a plea bargain. Sweeney was one of 11 suspects arrested in March 2012 following a lengthy Winnipeg police investigation dubbed Project Flatline. According to the Winnipeg Free Press,

Sweeney admitted in court that he ran the sophisticated drug dealing operation, which saw between one and two kilograms of cocaine being sold every month on Winnipeg streets between May 2011 and February 2012. Sweeney was buying the cocaine from suppliers in British Columbia and then handing it off to the Redlined Support Crew, the puppet gang of the Hells Angels, who turned the cocaine into crack cocaine and sold it in smaller amounts through street dealers. Court was told the illegal operation was generating sales of more than \$100,000 every month. Sweeney was arrested in March 2012 at the airport as he was preparing to leave with his wife for a vacation to Jamaica.

In addition to the prison sentence, the court also ordered Sweeney to forfeit his family home, several bank accounts which held more than \$500,000, and two Harley Davidson motorcycles.

Meanwhile, CBC news is reporting that the Manitoba government "is taking the first step" to have the Hells Angels declared a criminal organization in that province. Justice Minister Andrew Swan announced in May that his department has submitted an application to have the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club added to a schedule of criminal groups. [The Manitoba Evidence Act was recently amended](#) to include provisions that allowed for certain groups to be deemed a "criminal organization."

"We are not only the first province, we believe we're the first jurisdiction in North America to take this innovative step to deal with organized crime," Swan told CBC News.

If the province's petition is successful, lawyers would no longer have to prove in future court cases that the Hells Angels is involved in criminal activity. "It will simplify that process ... As one of my officials said, 'we don't have to prove that the sun rises in the east day after day.' The judge can then take notice of that and allow proceedings to go ahead more quickly," Swan said.

The Hells Angels will have an opportunity to object to the classification in writing to an independent, external review panel, which reviews the government petition, the objections by the group in question, and any other relevant evidence.

Sources: [Winnipeg Free Press, April 29 2013, Local Hells Angels boss gets 11 years](#); [CBC News, May 16 2013, Manitoba wants Hells Angels deemed criminal organization: New classification would help with future court cases against members](#)

Ontario

The Gangsters Out Blog noted recently that 2012 marked the 35th anniversary of the Outlaws motorcycle chapter in Ottawa. [Among the photos from the anniversary party posted on the blog](#) are some showing members of the Rock Machine motorcycle club, who sport the same black and white patches of the Outlaws. Yet another photo shows partiers wearing the black and white Mongol patches (including one from the Nomads chapter and one from the Swedish chapter).

Source: [Gangsters Out Blog, May 26, 2013, The Outlaws MC in Ontario](#)

Quebec

In April, six men, including two senior full-patch members of the Hells Angels' Trois Rivières chapter, have pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit murder at a Quebec courthouse. Mario Brouillette and Claude Giguère were among the six to plead guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit murder. The cases are related to Operation SharQc, a major police investigation into the Hells Angels in Quebec that culminated with multiple arrests and charges in 2009. Four of the six other men have already been sentenced.

The 51-year-old Giguère, a member of the Trois-Rivières chapter since 1991, received a 20-year sentence. However, he will only serve a fraction of that time in jail because of the prison time he was already serving when he was charged in Operation SharQc in 2009. At that time, according to [Paul Cherry of the Montreal Gazette](#), Giguère

... was already serving an 8-year sentence he received for pleading guilty to drug trafficking and participating in the activities of a gang in 2001 ... A police investigation revealed he had purchased several kilograms of cocaine and hashish from the Hells Angels' Nomads chapter based in Montreal. Investigators had uncovered the Nomads' sophisticated accounting system and learned that Giguère was account number 111 on a computerized ledger. The fact the Hells Angels used Giguère's nickname, Macho, as a coded reference in their ledger made things very easy for the police. ... Previous to that, in 1997, Giguère pleaded guilty to taking part in a conspiracy to murder a man named Gino Hallé and was sentenced to a 2-year prison term. Both of those sentences counted against the overall 20-year sentence Giguère received ..."

Three other members of the Hells Angels sentenced — 42-year-old Mario Brouillette, 48-year-old Luc Dallaire, 51-year-old René Monfettev — were also part of the roundup of Hells Angels through Operation SharQc.

As Paul Cherry writes, “Almost every member of the Hells Angels in Quebec, along with several of their associates — a total of 144 people — have been arrested since April 2009. The first jury trial related to Operation SharQc is scheduled to begin in either May or September. About 25 of the accused had entered guilty pleas similar to Giguère’s ...”

Police were also able to use the accounting system of the Hells Angels Nomads chapter to charge Dallaire, a member of the Hells Angels’ Trois-Rivières chapter since 1993. According to Cherry, “it proved Dallaire bought 60 kilograms of hashish and a small amount of cocaine from the Nomads in 2000. On Oct. 24, 2001, Dallaire received a 9-year sentence for drug trafficking.”

Less than a week after these sentences were handed out, Quebec’s appeals court issued a decision that upheld a lower court decision to free 31 Hells Angels and associates arrested and charged as a result of Operation SharQc, because it would have taken too long to put them on trial. The 31 men were ordered released by Superior Court Justice James Brunton in 2011 after he decided it would take too long for their trial dates to come around. According to the Canadian Press, “He stressed at the time his decision had nothing to do with guilt or innocence – but with the fact the justice system was ill-equipped to deal with the complex file.” The 31 who were released were not facing murder charges; most were charged with drug trafficking and participation in a criminal organization.

Sources: [Montreal Gazette, April 5, 2013, Hells Angels convicted, but could be free soon](#); [Vancouver Sun, April 6, 2013, Six Hells Angels plead guilty to murder conspiracy](#); CTV News, April 11 2013, Quebec appeals court upholds ruling freeing 31 Hells Angels due to trial delays



In June, the CBC reported that a police task force of different regional police forces in Quebec raided 16 locations in and around Sherbrooke targeting an alleged Hells Angels drug trafficking network. About 235 officers from several local police forces and the RCMP carried out search warrants in 16 locations in the Eastern Townships, which resulted in the arrests of 28 people and the seizure of small quantities of drugs. According to the CBC, “Aurélié Guindon of Quebec provincial police said officers arrested at least one member of the Hells Angels. She said the drug ring was managed by members of the gang, and trafficked cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana.”

Source: [CBC News, June 12 2013, Quebec police raid of Hells Angels drug ring nets 28 arrests](#)

Atlantic Canada

Police in St. John's, Newfoundland say a recent firebombing and drive-by shooting may be the result of attempts by the Hells Angels to establish a presence in the city.

Shortly before midnight on May 31, two homes and three vehicles on an otherwise quiet street in a new St. John's subdivision were strafed with bullets from an AK-47 assault rifle fired from a moving vehicle. The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary believes the assailants mistakenly targeted the wrong home in a feud between rival drug dealers. The CBC reported that police are also investigating possible links between the violence and outlaw motorcycle gangs, in particular the Hells Angels.

As well, early that same morning, a car was firebombed in another residential area. Police believe the car fire is connected to the shooting. The house that was firebombed belonged to 32-year-old Bradley Summers. On July 2, VCOM.com reported that Summers along with 50-year-old Alan Potter, also of St. John's, are together facing a total of 10 charges including common assault and uttering threats. The incidents occurred between March 22 and May 25 in the downtown area of St. John's. Police won't say if Summers or Potter are being investigated in relation to the drive-by shooting. They also did not indicate if the two men are tied to outlaw biker gangs or illegal drug trafficking (despite the VCOM.com story that accused the two men of being involved with outlaw motorcycle gang activity).

In June of 2012, the RCMP in Grand Falls-Windsor, Newfoundland, told the media they are investigating the two local one percenter motorcycle clubs in the area: the Bacchus MC Newfoundland Chapter and the Outlaws Canada Grand Falls-Windsor Chapter. The Bacchus set up their chapter in January 2011 while the Outlaws arrived in August 2012.

[According to the CBC](#), RCMP Cpl. Mike Fewer says intelligence information suggests some members of these groups have been involved in drug trafficking and weapons offences, both locally and nationally. The members of the two biker clubs are primarily from the local area, but the RCMP said they see members from all across the country on a regular basis, especially during the riding season.

CBC News reported that their sources said that each of the chapters has about six full fledged members. They also said one member of the local Outlaws chapter is facing drug trafficking charges, a case that is currently before the courts.

Seamus O'Keefe, executive director of the George Street Association, [told the CBC](#) he has heard rumours that the Hells Angels or another biker group is looking to take over a bar in the area.

"There has been a sense from the information we share amongst our bar owners that there is an increased presence," said O'Keefe. The association has gone so far to meet with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary to discuss the perceived increase in numbers of gang members and gang-related violence. According to the CBC, "O'Keefe said bar staff have witnessed a number of physical assaults in the last four to six weeks that went beyond typical skirmishes. He added there has also been a presence of gang "colours" in various bars."

Sources: [Canoe.ca, June 3 2013, Violence erupts as Hells Angels put down roots in Newfoundland](#); [CBC News, June 2, 2013, Wrong house struck in drug-related drive-by shooting](#); [CBC News, June 12 2012, Biker gang clubs in central Newfoundland](#); [CBC News, June 7 2013, Biker gang rumours put George Street owners on edge](#); [VOCM.com, July 2 2013, Bikers Make Brief Court Appearance](#)



In Nova Scotia, the CBC reported that the introduction of a new one percenter motorcycle club in the province increases the possibility of a turf war in the province. The newest club to establish itself in the province – the Gate Keepers – set up their clubhouse along Highway 7 in Musquodoboit Harbour earlier this year.

Police say the Gate Keepers are aligned with the Hells Angels chapter in London, Ontario and wear a red and white patch, which are the colours of the HA. According to the CBC,

... police say the infamous Hells Angels are making a play to regain control of Nova Scotia, causing tension with the existing Bacchus outlaw motorcycle gang and setting the stage for what could be a turf war in Atlantic Canada. The Angels left Nova Scotia in 2003 after a series of police raids put most of its members in prison. RCMP Insp. Joanne Crampton said the new Gate Keepers patch has angered members of the black and gold wearing Bacchus. “There’s approximately 80 Bacchus here and they feel that they have Atlantic Canada as their territory. The concern now is that the Hells Angels have made it clear that they want Atlantic Canada to be their territory and they are now doing it through the Gate Keepers,” she said. There are several Bacchus chapters in Atlantic Canada — one in Nova Scotia, three in New Brunswick, one in Prince Edward Island and two in Newfoundland. Bacchus is one of Canada’s oldest biker clubs, with long-time links to the Hells Angels. Its members have been arrested in raids involving the Angels, and the club is respected in the outlaw biker world. Still, when it comes to hierarchy the Bacchus feel they are equal to, not below, the Angels. Police say they fear that alpha dog mentality will play out in a territory fight. Crampton said a disagreement among the clubs could bring a crime wave to the region. “It can bring a lot of violence to our community it can bring tensions between the two groups as they look at how they are going to establish territory and how they are going to take over the Atlantic Canada area,” she said. Police expect members of the Gate Keepers, the Hells Angels and the Bacchus clubs to attend a party celebrating the anniversary of the Hells Angels-friendly Darksiders club in Dartmouth.

Source: [CBC News, April 10 2013, Biker gang turf war on the horizon, warn police](#)



David James Bishop, who police say is a member of the Bacchus motorcycle gang, was sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison on drug charges. Bishop was charged in March after police raided his house in Halifax. At the time of Bishop’s arrest, police said he was charged as part of an ongoing investigation into the smuggling of drugs into the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Dartmouth.

A Crown attorney told the court that Bishop provided drugs to a police agent on back-to-back days early this year. “According to the Chronicle Herald newspaper, “On Feb. 12, the pair met in the parking lot of the Quinpool Road Superstore in Halifax and Bishop gave the woman 1.99 grams of cocaine to sample for free. The next day, they got together in the parking lot at Alderney Landing in Dartmouth, with Bishop supplying several types of steroids. Bishop wore Bacchus clothing to his meetings with the agent. During their conversations, he talked about having two jail guards working for him and said he had lost \$17,000 when Malcolm Beaton was arrested. Beaton, a former corrections officer, was arrested last October outside the entrance to the jail and faces charges of breach of trust, possession of hydromorphone and marijuana for the purpose of trafficking and conspiracy to traffic in the drugs.”

During the search of Bishop’s home, police found two vials of hash, various types of pills, 11 rounds of various calibres of ammunition, a bulletproof vest, brass knuckles, a palm-held knife, a set of throwing knives, digital scales and labels for steroids.

Bishop was scheduled to have a bail hearing in April. Instead, he pleaded guilty to five charges: trafficking in cocaine, trafficking in steroids, possession of hashish, possessing ammunition while prohibited from doing so and breaching a recognizance by failing to keep the peace and be of good behaviour. In addition to the prison sentence, Bishop was prohibited from owning or possessing weapons for the rest of his life. Bishop had 14 previous criminal convictions but none related to drugs.

Source: [The Chronicle Herald, April 12 2013, Alleged Bacchus member sent to prison on drug charges](#)